What is Love?

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What is Love?

by Burningstars98

Summary

Silver is struggling with something, and it's making his powers go haywire. A late-night talk with his guardian may help him get a grip on how he's feeling and why.

(Post-Little Steps, Big Changes)

"Alright alright alright!" Sonic announced, "Next up to bat is the newest member to the team. The psychic powerhouse, the mental master-"

"Sonic, I dunno about this..."
Silver's hands gripped the bat, his eyes shifting around the field that was presently empty of spectators. It was already mid-morning, a light dusting of ice still covering the ground that Miss Allison had called *frost.* She'd said something about the first snow coming up soon, but she hadn't had time to elaborate on what that *was* before she headed out for work that morning.

Sonic and Tails were out of school for the week, thanks to some holiday approaching they called Thanksgiving. It was a holiday celebrating being thankful for the things they had, and because of Miss Allison, the Wachowskis and Green Hills as a whole, Silver and Blaze had a *lot* to be thankful for.

Because of the break in school, Sonic had asked if the two of them wanted to come with them to the baseball field for a little bit, but the last thing Silver had expected to happen when he agreed was for Sonic to hand him a big, wooden stick, and then tell him to use it to hit a projectile that his fellow hedgehog would throw at him.

Sonic stood on a slightly raised part in the middle of the field he'd called the Pitcher's Mount, a Green Hills ballcap on his head as he dug his feet into the partially frozen ground. "Come on, it'll be fine!" He replied, "Look, all you gotta do is swing when the ball comes at you and knock it out into the field, then run around the bases before Tails can get the ball back to me, and I get it to Knuckles behind you there."

Silver looked behind him, where Knuckles was crouching, prepared to catch the ball if it should get past Silver.

The echidna shrugged, "Sonic has reduced me to this position due to my superior methods for hitting the ball."

Sonic frowned at his older brother, "Knuckles, hitting the ball so hard it catches fire and burns a hole through the scoreboard isn't superior to actually following the rules."

"You have no right to argue that! You insisted that even though I knocked the ball out of the field, since you *technically caught it,* that it counts as an out!"

Silver groaned softly, this already seemed like a bad idea.

"It'll be fine, Silver." Tails encouraged, "Don't worry about making a home run, just try to make contact with the ball."

Silver took in a deep breath and then let it out in a puff of mist as he nodded. "Okay...Okay..." He whispered, crouching down a little bit.

"You got this, Silver!"

Silver saw Blaze standing off to the side, cheering him on from the safety behind the fence. Seeing her face made his nervousness fade just a little.

"Alright... Let's see if you can handle *this!*"

Silver saw the blue hedgehog's arm beginning to spin at his trademark speed, and Tails was starting to tell him not to go so hard on Silver's first attempt.

"Do not make the novice face your hardest throw!" Knuckles insisted.

Silver felt a twitch shoot up his spine about the same time the ball snapped loose from Sonic's hand in a bolt of light. Silver's eyes flickered blue as panic overrode his senses; for a moment, he forgot it was a ball, for a moment, he was back on the burning island he'd grown up on. An island where he had to dodge flying balls of burning rock and debris as Pele threw fragments of her crown down onto the land. In that moment, he barely thought about where he was, only to avoid being hit.

There was a burst of energy from him, and then the harsh rattling of metal, and Silver snapped back into reality and looked behind him. Knuckles was lying on the ground, the ball in one hand and shaking the other with a grimace. He'd slid backwards- or perhaps been *thrown back*- into the fence, the frost torn away from the soil by his movement. Had he... Had *he* done that?

"Knuckles!"
Blaze jumped over the fence and was hurrying towards him, "Are you alright?"

Knuckles quickly collected himself, sitting up straight and putting his wounded hand behind his back. "I am quite alright, Blaze. No need for concern."

Blaze frowned, pulling his hand back out. "Are you sure? Perhaps we should have your mother overlook your hand."

"No need." The echidna gave the cat a smile, "The pain is waning as we speak."

"Dude,"
Sonic came over, a smile on his face. "That's what I call a *Curveball!*"

"I...What?" Silver murmured, still a little disoriented.

"But I don't think making the ball curve *around you* for Knuckles to catch is quite the right way to go... Try again?"

Silver dropped the bat and plopped down on Home Plate, putting his head in his hands as he scrubbed at his quills.

"Hey, don't get discouraged." Tails encouraged, "That was only your first try! We can try again, if you want."

Silver shook his head, "No... No."
He got up from the ground and handed the bat to Tails, "I-I think I'm done for today, thank

you."

"Oh, come on!" Sonic pleaded, "We just got *started!*"

"Do not try to force him if he is not ready." Knuckles responded, letting Blaze remove his gloves to examine his hands and confirm he was fine. "It may be that base of ball is not the most suitable task for him."

Silver felt another twitch, and then gasped as they heard a creaking, before a large limb came crashing down from a nearby tree, landing on the ground right where Blaze had been standing a few moments ago and smashing the fence down with it.

"Whoa!" Sonic stared at the limb, "Uh... Maybe you're right, maybe we should move on to something else..."

"We need to tell Dad about this," Tails informed, "He might want Mr. Givens to check the rest of the trees for similar damage." He then turned to Silver, "You and Blaze can come over to our house and play video games, if you want. I'm sure Dad won't mind."

"If you are certain, I *would* like to learn how to *play*." Blaze replied with a smile, "What about you, Silver?"

Silver shook his head, "N-No, you... You go ahead, I think I'll just head home. I think I need some quiet time for a little bit after that."

Blaze frowned, "Are you alright?"

"Don't worry about me, Blaze. I'll be fine. I might come over in a little bit, you go have fun with them."

Blaze looked at him for a moment more, and then nodded. "Okay... If you don't feel well, be sure to tell Miss Allison?"

"I will..."

Silver walked casually down the street until the others were out of sight, and then ran the rest of the way back to Miss Allison's house. The others hadn't seen it, they hadn't felt it, but that tree branch hadn't just fallen out of nowhere; it had something to do with these twitches and his powers going out of control.

He had little doubts that the branch falling had been his fault, and probably caused by his anxiety over losing control over his powers in the first place. He needed some peace and quiet, he needed to get himself back under wraps.

Thick clouds were forming over town, bringing with it an icy wind that whipped up under Silver's coat and chilled him to the bone, sending shivers through his limbs as he fumbled with the key-holder they used to hide the spare key to the back door. He'd decided he didn't

like the cold a long time ago, and he wasn't exactly *used* to it. After his recent flu infection, the last thing Silver wanted was to get too cold and sick again.

He finally got the key and went to the door, unlocking it before returning the key to its hiding place and entering the much-warmer interior of the house. He locked the door behind him, removed his boots, and left them by the back door before moving into the kitchen to find something to eat. A quick search of the pantry found cups of applesauce, and he grabbed one and a spoon from the drawer before plopping down on the kitchen floor, shoving big spoonfuls of the pulverized fruit into his mouth.

"Get a grip, Silver..." He whispered to himself between bites, "...Just calm down... Everything's fine... You're fine... Blaze is fine and hanging out with Sonic, and Tails, and Knuckles-"

Another twitch, and he saw the light flicker overhead, and he groaned. Why was this happening? What was causing him to have these sudden spasms that were making his powers go haywire?

He set the empty applesauce cup off to the side, and tried to think over the past hour or so... He'd been nervous about playing baseball with them, and then past experiences with flying projectiles got the best of him... But the branch... Was it really just because he was still jittery from before?

His ears folded back against his head as he thought about Blaze rushing to Knuckles' aid after Silver had hit him with the rogue ball, the echidna insisting he was fine and Blaze not being convinced-

His eyes opened as he heard something thump and then a low rumbling, and he looked up as a glass cup from breakfast earlier in the morning rolled off the table. Silver gasped and tried to catch it with his powers, but then yelped as it shattered in mid-air, sending shards scattering across the floor as he dropped them in his shock.

Silver pulled his hands back against his chest, looking to see whether or not he'd cut his hands. There appeared to be no shards on him, but he carefully got up and went to the 'clean-closet,' as Miss Allison called it. Inside was a jumbled mess of brooms, mops, buckets and anything else needed to clean up a mess.

Silver grabbed a broom and dustpan, returning to the mess and quickly cleaning up the shards he could find reflecting on the floor before throwing them away in the trash can. Had he knocked it over? Had he been the reason it fell and shattered? The rest of the morning told him it was a high probability.

He groaned, and then once he was certain he'd properly gotten all of the glass cleaned up, he hurried into his bedroom and climbed under the covers. He needed to calm down, he needed to keep his powers inactive... and right now, it looked like the only way to do that would be to sleep.

He pulled the blanket over his head, his ears flattened against his head as he tried desperately to quiet his mind and still his frenzied powers... He had to sleep, he had to if this was going to

stop. "Why is this happening...?" He whispered, "...Why am I so..."

As he slumped into sleep in the dark, quiet room, the last word finally entered his head... *Angry.*

Tom had called Maddie at the clinic when the kids had returned, telling her that Blaze was over at their house and Silver had gone back to her house, but may be coming over later. By the time Allison got off work that afternoon, she hadn't gotten any texts saying that Blaze had gone home or that Silver had joined the other kids, so when she pulled up to the front door to pick the cat up from her playdate, she wasn't too surprised when it was just Blaze that came out with Tom escorting her.

"Hey, Pretty Girl." She greeted as Blaze opened the back door and climbed in, "Did you have fun today?"

"I did." Blaze informed, "Sonic introduced me to the concept of video games today. I am not quite sure if it is something I will ever be proficient at, but I enjoyed myself, at least."

"Can't ask for much more than that."

Blaze nodded, her smile fading a bit as she pulled the seat belt over her lap. "I am concerned, however... Silver said that he might come by as well earlier this morning, but then he never did. I hope he is not ill again, did he contact you?"

"No, not today."
Allison waved to Tom as they pulled out, and he waved back. "I'm sure he's fine, Blaze. Sometimes being in a nice, quiet house for a day is just as good as being with friends for the afternoon... Now, what kinds of games did Sonic show you this afternoon?"

The rest of the drive was filled with Blaze's descriptions of the game they played; they'd started out immersing the cat in video game technique with a game that Sonic had deemed to be simple and Tails' favorite: Lego Batman. The teamwork and easy puzzles provided Blaze with a good way to get used to the controls, though she still found herself looking down at the buttons on the controller frequently when she couldn't remember where a specific one was.

They'd blown through most of the story-mode that afternoon, with the three boys taking turns playing alongside her, with each other, and tending to Obsidian, who Sonic had given a controller without batteries. The toddler seemed to think he was actually participating, hitting the buttons and getting excited by the bright colors and exploding Lego people, but it was growing increasingly harder to tell if Obsidian knew whether he'd been duped or not.

Allison loved listening to the little cat talk about the game, trying to remember the characters names and ironically having the hardest time remembering *Catwoman's* name.

She pulled up into the drive and then the garage, and they entered the house, finding it very quiet. "Silver?" She called softly, "You here, Kiddo?"

She walked into the kitchen as she saw an applesauce cup still sitting on the floor with a spoon beside it. "Thought I taught the kid better than that..." she murmured with a smirk, but it faded as she saw something glinting under the fridge. "Hmm?"
She reached under and pulled it out, examining a large piece of glass. "How long has *that* been under there...?"

She got up and walked over to the trash can, opening it to find other pieces of glass also in the can. "Hmm..."

"What is it, Miss Allison?" Blaze asked.

"Looks like Silver broke a glass while we were gone... Cleaned it up, though."

Blaze frowned, "I wonder what happened..."
She went to their bedroom door and peered in, Allison leaning over her. A familiar lump under the blanket told them that Silver was in bed, his lack of movement suggesting he was asleep.

Allison closed the door again, "Let's not bother him about it right now..." She whispered.

"What if he has been asleep *all day?* He may be ill again."

"If he's feeling under the weather again, then I'm sure he'll let us know." Allison bent down to the cat's level, "Why don't you pull the clean towels out of the dryer and fold them, and I'll get dinner going? We'll check on Silver once it's done..."

Allison was jolted out of sleep by something brushing her arm.

After finishing dinner, Allison had checked in on Silver, who was awake now, but insisted that he wasn't hungry and just wanted to be left alone for a little bit. He'd been alone *all day,* but a quick hand to his forehead had comforted her in knowing he at least wasn't running a fever. He seemed more *upset by something* than anything else, but the hedgehog's guardian knew that if he had a problem, he could come to her when he was ready to talk about it.

He'd finally gotten up for a little bit and ate a grilled cheese she made for him, and then helped Blaze put the folded laundry away; but he hardly talked, other than apologizing for the broken glass when Blaze asked about it. Apparently he'd knocked it off of the table and then wasn't able to catch it in time.

"Accidents happen, good job cleaning it up, though." Allison had praised; the hedgehog had only shrugged. Yup, something was *definitely* going on, but *what?*

They'd all gone to bed early, and Allison had been in a deep sleep when something ran over her arm in the darkness.

She sat up quickly, looking around frantically through her curly hair in her face before pulling it out of her view and seeing a series of glowing cyan markings in the darkness.
"Sil...Silver...! Oh..." She huffed, putting a hand to her chest. "You *scared* me, Kiddo..."

"I'm sorry, Miss Allison..." Silver apologized, pulling his hands up to his chin and illuminating his face a little. "...I just... You said if we *needed* something, then... I'll go, I shouldn't have woken you-"

"No no no..."
Allison reached over and turned her nightstand lamp on, wincing at the sudden brightness before her eyes adjusted and she looked back at the hedgehog standing awkwardly at the foot of her bed. "...It's okay... I told you that if you needed something, to come to me, even in the middle of the night..."

She checked the clock- *2:15AM*- and then patted the blanket. "Come here..."

Silver came around to the other side of the bed and climbed up onto it, settling on the other side with his knees up at his chest. His ears folded back against his head, arms wrapped around his legs.

"What's the matter...?"

He shrugged, "...I don't know how to explain it..."
He was quiet for a moment more, and then he closed his eyes. "...I think there's something wrong with me."

"How so?"

"...I don't know..."

Allison sat up a little bit more, "Hmm... Well then, that *is* a problem... Something's wrong, but you don't know what it is... Let's start at the beginning then. Is it like you're sick? Do you feel bad in here?"

She gently put a hand on his side, and Silver shook his head. "Okay... How about here?" She moved up his side to his chest, where his heart would be, and he shook his head, and then he pointed to his head. "Your head? Does it hurt?"

"No... I just..."

His expression shifted around, as if something were trying to come out but he wasn't sure if he could let it out.

"Silver...?"
Silver groaned and rolled his eyes, unfolding to flop forward onto the quilt. His voice was muffled in the fabric as his face was shoved into it. "...*Come again,* Hon?"

Silver rolled his head off to the side a little, talking out of the side of his mouth. "...I don't think I like Knuckles."

Allison nodded slowly as he rolled his head over to the other side, staring at the wall and away from her. "Hmm... And why is that?"

"That's the problem, *I don't know!*" He waved his arms around as he spoke, "He hasn't *done* anything to warrant it, nor has he *said* anything that I can determine would spur such a response, but sometimes when he talks- especially to *her,* I get all bristly and agitated and I-"

"*Her?* You mean *Blaze?*"

Silver shoved his face back into the blanket, but he nodded.

Allison smirked, leaning forward and stroking the teenager's back. "Hmm... So maybe it isn't that you don't like Knuckles, but more that you don't like Knuckles talking to Blaze."

Silver flopped over onto his back, staring up at the ceiling. "It's not that I don't *want* her to make other friends, I *do!* I just... *I dunno...!*"

She offered him a throw pillow to shove his face into and he gladly took it. He was quiet for a moment again and then pulled it back down. "What's the matter with me, Miss Allison? Why is it that only Knuckles warrants that response? I don't have this problem when she talks with Sonic or Tails!"

"Sonic and Tails aren't showing the same kind of interest as Knuckles is."

Allison patted Silver's leg, "Does him talking to her like that make you... *Jealous?*"

"I...I don't think so. *Am I?*"

"Hmm... I think I know what's going on."

Silver looked back at her, "You do?"

"Uh huh... I think you're suffering from a case of *PBS.*"

"What's that?"

Allison moved to lie down beside him, "...*Protective Brother Syndrome.*"

"That's a sickness?"

"Well... Sort of. It's like this..."
She turned towards him, "You care about Blaze very, very much, right?"

"Yes, Ma'am. I don't know what I'd do if something happened to her."

"Exactly. You don't want anything to happen to her, physically or emotionally. You want to make sure that nobody hurts her."

"But Knuckles hasn't show any signs of wanting to hurt her, so why-"

"That's not the point. The point is that you want to *make sure* he doesn't hurt her, so when she's getting close to him, it bothers you because you don't trust him yet. It's like if someone

wanted to get close to you and Blaze. I would be naturally suspicious of them, protective of you and not letting them get too close, until I know that they really, truly, mean no harm."

Silver was quiet for a moment, "...I see him as a possible threat to her happiness, not her physical form?"

"Exactly."

"...So you think I see her like a sister? Does that mean I still love her?"

Allison grinned, "There's more than one kind of love, Silver, and there are words to go with different kinds... The kind I think you feel for Blaze is called *Storge;* it is the love between family, like how Knuckles loves Sonic, Tails, and Obsidian as brothers, and Maddie and Tom love them as parents... There is also *Philia,* which is the love between friends. But the one Knuckles feels with Blaze is the *beginning* of the same love that is between Maddie and Tom... *Eros*... Romantic love."

Silver nodded slowly, looking thoughtfully up at the ceiling. "So... How do I get to the point that I *can* trust him?"

"Well, I think the first thing you can do is tell Knuckles how you feel. Once he knows how you feel, then he can find ways to show you that there's no reason to be worried. But he can't help you fix the problem if he doesn't know what the problem is."

Silver pulled the pillow over his face again, "I don't like confrontation, Miss Allison." He responded as he then put it under his head.

"I know... And I can't decide what you should do for you, I can only tell you how *I* would handle the situation."

Both were quiet for several minutes, just lying there on the bed in the quiet.

Allison stared up at the ceiling, trying to think of any more wisdom she could share. She'd been in the same situation once, when her older sister had been in love with a guy. The guy had sent off so many alarm bells in Allison's head, and she'd expressed the same concerns to both her parents and her sister... But in *her* case, she'd been *right.* The guy was a major jerk, but her sister had been too blinded by her infatuation with him that she didn't see it, and then she'd run off with him... Leaving her then-boyfriend behind, his heart torn into shreds.

He still lived here in Green Hills, and she still saw him every time he drove by in one of the police cruisers... Poor Wade, he didn't deserve that sort of thing.

There were no alarm bells in her head about Knuckles; she'd known the echidna longer than Silver- not by much, but still longer- and he seemed like a good kid. He tried to be kind, tried to be honorable and noble to everyone he engaged with... He didn't seem like the kind of person who would hurt Blaze knowingly, but she could understand where Silver was coming from.

She turned to face the hedgehog, hearing him give a light snore; he'd fallen asleep. She smirked, and then carefully got up, folding the blanket over him on that side before getting back in on her side and settling under the blanket as well.

"Goodnight, Silver..." She whispered, stroking his head before laying back down and turning out the lamp.

Silver hadn't meant to stay in his guardian's room all night, but when he opened his eyes, he found the room brightened from the light coming in the window. The bed on Miss Allison's side was empty, but she'd tucked the blanket around him on his side, keeping him warm.

He pulled the blanket a little further over him, thinking back over what she'd said the night before. He'd told her he wasn't jealous, but was that true? Was he really not upset over the fact that she suddenly wanted to spend time with other people and not just him?

Silver got along with Tails fairly well, and while Sonic's confidence and excited demeanor conflicted with Silver's natural caution, he couldn't say that he *didn't* like his fellow hedgehog. Obsidian? It was still too early to tell how well he'd get along with Obsidian... But Knuckles...

Like he'd told Miss Allison the night before, Silver couldn't find any reasons to make him think the echidna was a problem... other than the fact that Blaze seemed to care about him more than she did the other two. Were the two of them even aware of it? Did Knuckles and Blaze see the same kind of love- the same *Eros*- that those on the outside did?

He pondered this as he rolled over, peering at the window to look out... All he saw was white.

The hedgehog sat up, his ears pricked up and quills flaring a bit. He scrambled out of the bed- ignoring the cold floor on his bare feet- and rushed to the window, pulling the curtains back.

The entire front yard was covered in a thick, white sheet of something, some of it having settled on the outer sill of the window. The covering spread out past their yard as well, coating the road and every house and yard within view, and more of it was falling down from the sky. Out on the driveway, he could see Miss Allison, appearing to try to shovel some of it out of the way.

"Oh no... No no no no-"

Silver rushed out of the room, flinging the door open and hurrying to the front door. He opened it, rushing out onto the front porch before being blindsided by a sudden gust of chilly wind. "Ah!... M-Miss Allison!" He pleaded from the porch.

Miss Allison looked up from her work, pulling the hood of her coat back so he could see her face. "Goodness, Silver! If you're gonna come out here, put on your coat and boots!" She responded with a smirk, "And close the front door, you're letting all the *cold air in* and the *hot air out*!"

Silver quickly closed the door behind him, but remained on the porch. "I don't understand, how can it be this *cold* if this much ash has fallen? Something massive must be on fire nearby, are we in *danger?*"

A puff of mist left Miss Allison's lips as she gave a laugh, "Okay... I see what's going on..." She walked back up the path from the driveway and up onto the porch, out of the falling debris. "No worries, Silver. There's no fire, and all this?" she gestured to the landscape, "This is not ash."

"It... It's not?"

"No." She gestured to the door, "Why don't you go get your sister and both of you put on your boots and coats? I'll explain it to *both of you* once you're all dressed for the weather."

Silver nodded, though still quite confused, and then he returned indoors. He almost ran into Blaze, who had been running for the front door looking as panicked as he'd been just a moment ago. "Blaze-"

"There's ash everywhere!" Blaze gasped, "What's going on?"

Silver shrugged, "Miss Allison says it's not ash, but she wants both of us to get dressed warm before we go back out on the porch, and I agree, it's *freezing* out there!"

The two of them got their boots, coats and gloves, and then once they were fully dressed up, they went back to the front door, where Miss Allison was now working on clearing off the walkway with the shovel.

"Brrrr!" Blaze shivered as she stepped out into the morning air, "It's even colder than it was yesterday!"

"Uh huh." Miss Allison responded, "I knew it was coming... So all of this, this is *snow.* It's frozen rain."

"But I thought frozen water was ice."

"It is... Come out here into it for a second, but be careful, the steps are a little slippery."

Silver and Blaze carefully stepped out from under the porch roof, letting the snow fall onto their heads and coats. It crunched under their feet, but the rest of the neighborhood was very quiet.

"Now hold your hand out and let a flake land on it."

Silver did, and then watched as the tiny flake, which he briefly saw was an intricate pattern, then vanished as it melted and soaked into his glove. "Whoa..."

"So snow is what happens when the air is just cool enough to make these flakes, but not cold enough that it hardens into solid chunks of ice. *That's* called an ice storm, and it can be a *lot* more dangerous than snowstorms, depending on circumstances."

Blaze's ears twitched about as she listened, "Why is it so quiet...? I don't hear anything but us right here."

"That's a cool thing about snow. Because it's so light, it forms little pockets of air between the layers, and those pockets trap sound in them, so when you're out in a snowfall like this, it's quiet and peaceful..."

Silver lifted his head, looking up at the sky overhead. Everything, even the sky, seemed swallowed in a white and light-gray haze. Snowflakes landed on his fur and stuck around for a little bit longer than they had on his hands, and he felt a smile forming. "...I like snow a lot better than ash." He whispered.

Miss Allison smiled, "Yeah, I would imagine so... You could probably be really good at playing hide-and-seek in the snow, Silver. Nobody would be able to find you."
She then looked back towards the garage, "Hey, you two wanna help me get the driveway shoveled a bit more? I've got two more in the garage. Once we get to the road, we can go inside and I'll make hot pancakes with apple cider, how's that sound?"

Silver smiled a bit more, "Yes, Ma'am!"
He took Blaze's hand, tugging his sister towards the garage. "Bet I can clear out more snow than you!"

"A competition? Well, it would be far from honorable to not give my best!"

Silver grinned as he found the shovels and handed one to her; this morning, it was just him and Blaze. He pushed the thoughts of talking to Knuckles about stuff to the back of his head, today, he was going to enjoy his first time in the snow.

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